

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. An image forming apparatus comprising:

an image scanning section located at an upper part of a housing of the apparatus for scanning an original to obtain image information therefrom;

a sheet feeding section located at a lower part of the housing for feeding sheets used for image forming; and

an image forming section disposed between the image scanning section and the sheet feeding section at one side of the housing;

wherein the image scanning section, the image forming section and the sheet feeding section are arranged generally in a U shape in cross section in the housing, a sheet delivery portion being formed in an inner empty space of the housing just between the image scanning section and the sheet feeding section; and

wherein the length (L1) of the sheet delivery portion as measured along a sheet transport direction is made smaller than the length (L2) of a maximum printable sheet size.

2. The image forming apparatus according to claim 1, wherein one side and the front of the inner empty space contiguously open to the exterior of the apparatus.

3. The image forming apparatus according to claim 2 further comprising a shifter mechanism incorporating sheet output rollers which are used as offset rollers for offsetting printed sheets along a direction perpendicular to the sheet transport direction to selectively discharge the printed sheets to different sheet delivery positions on the sheet delivery portion.

4. The image forming apparatus according to claim 3, wherein said shifter mechanism includes:

an offset unit mounted in the apparatus movably along the direction perpendicular to the sheet transport direction, the offset unit including the offset rollers for ejecting the printed sheets;

an offsetting force generator for shifting the offset unit along the direction perpendicular to the sheet transport direction;

a driving force transmission part connected to the offset rollers; and

a roller turning force generator for turning the driving force transmission part.

5. The image forming apparatus according to claim 2, wherein the sheet delivery portion is shaped to form a generally horizontal sheet receiving surface extending in a

direction perpendicular to a sheet output direction.